

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently amended): An apparatus for reducing a level of noise ~~component~~ contained in an input signal, comprising:

a detecting device for detecting ~~[[a]]~~ said level of said noise ~~component~~;

B
an adjusting device for adjusting a level of said input signal so as to make said detected level of said noise ~~component~~ equal to ~~or lower than~~ a predetermined threshold level;

a reducing device for reducing a ~~signal-component~~ level of said adjusted input signal ~~whose level is equal to and lower than said predetermined threshold level in~~ accordance with a predetermined characteristic of relation between said level of said adjusted input signal and a reducing level of said adjusted input signal; and

a restoring device for restoring a level of said reduced adjusted ~~input~~ signal to said level of said input signal.

2. (Original): An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said detecting device comprises:

an extracting device for extracting a high frequency component of said input signal from said input signal;

a rectifying device for rectifying said extracted high frequency component;

an envelope generating device for generating an envelope signal of said extracted high frequency component; and

a level analyzing device for detecting a lowest level of said envelope signal.

B

3. (Currently amended): An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said detecting device comprises:

a sound existing part detecting device for detecting a sound existing part of said input signal; and

a noise level detecting device for detecting said level of said noise ~~component~~ which is contained in said sound existing part.

4. (Currently amended): An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said adjusting device comprises:

a determining device for determining whether or not said level of said noise ~~component~~ is higher than said predetermined threshold level; and

a level adjusting device for adjusting said level of said input signal so as to make said level of said noise ~~component~~ equal to ~~or lower than~~ said predetermined threshold level if said determining device determines that said level of said noise ~~component~~ is higher than said predetermined threshold level.

3
5. (Previously presented): An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said reducing device comprises:

a dividing device for dividing said adjusted input signal into a plurality of divisional components whose frequency bands are different from each other;

a plurality of signal level detecting devices, each of which detects a level of one of said divisional components;

a plurality of attenuating devices, each of which attenuates one of said divisional components on the basis of said detected level of said corresponding divisional component; and

a mixing device for mixing all of said attenuated divisional components.

6. (Original): An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said adjusting device comprises an attenuator, and said restoring device comprises an amplifier.

7. (Currently amended): An apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein said amplifier amplifies said reduced adjusted ~~input~~ signal by using an inverse number of an attenuation factor of said attenuator as an amplification factor.

8. (Currently amended): A method of reducing a noise ~~component~~ contained in an input signal, comprising the processes of:

detecting a level of said noise ~~component~~;

adjusting a level of said input signal so as to make said detected level of said noise ~~component~~ equal to ~~or lower than~~ a predetermined threshold level;

reducing a ~~signal component level~~ of said adjusted input signal ~~whose level is equal to and lower than said predetermined threshold level~~ in accordance with a predetermined characteristic of relation between said level of said adjusted input signal and a reducing level of said adjusted input signal; and

restoring a level of said reduced adjusted ~~input~~ signal to said level of said input signal.

9. (Original): A method according to Claim 8, wherein said detecting process comprises the processes of:

extracting a high frequency component of said input signal from said input signal;

rectifying said extracted high frequency component;

generating an envelope signal of said extracted high frequency component; and

detecting a lowest level of said envelope signal.


10. (Currently amended): A method according to Claim 8, wherein said detecting process comprises the processes of:

detecting a sound existing part of said input signal; and

detecting said level of said noise ~~component~~ which is contained in said sound existing part.

11. (Currently amended): A method according to Claim 8, wherein said adjusting process comprises the processes of:

determining whether or not said level of said noise ~~component~~ is higher than said predetermined threshold level; and

 adjusting a level of said input signal so as to make said level of said noise ~~component~~ equal to ~~or lower than~~ said predetermined threshold level if it is determined in said determining process that said level of said noise ~~component~~ is higher than said predetermined threshold level.

12. (Previously presented): A method according to Claim 8, wherein said reducing process comprises the processes of:

dividing said adjusted input signal into a plurality of divisional components whose frequency bands are different from each other;

detecting a level of each of said divisional components;

attenuating each of said divisional components on the basis of said detected level of said corresponding divisional component; and

mixing all of said attenuated divisional components.